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Journal #5: The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck

Summary: At the end of the last summary the reader was told that O-lan was basically going to die. The beginning of this section O-lan is on bed rest and it is obvious how much she is missed around the house. The family mourns over the fact that their mother is going to die and there is nothing they can do to help. O-lan’s final wish is to see her son’s marriage before she dies. The other father agrees to the arrangement even though his daughter is not of age. However, O-lan is too weak to attend the ceremony so she just listens from her bed. After the marriage O-lan passes away with her final words being about being beautiful because she gave her husband children. Soon after this occurrence, Wang’s father who is very old passes away as well. Now that the special people in Wang’s life he can now focus on his unwanted houseguests. Wang’s eldest son is very angered by his uncle’s family’s behavior, for all they do is complain. Wang has to explain that his uncle is in a notorious band of robbers and cannot refuse his uncle’s commands. Wang’s son suggests that they kill the family or give them opium to get addicted to. Wang disagrees until one day he catches his uncle’s son trying to molest Wang’s daughter. Wang buys a small amount of opium and the uncle and his wife become addicted and stop complaining. However, their son is still lurking around the house and eyeing up any woman he sees. Wang’s sons suggest that Wang rent the old whorehouse so that the uncle and his family could live at the farm and Wang’s family stay at the house. Next, Wang’s second son shows interest in getting married to a village woman. After getting married, the uncle’s son decided to travel north to join the war (YES!). Additionally, the eldest son has his first child and it is a son. However, in the midst of this Wang’s most faithful entire happiness servant, Ching dies. Wang is very upset and wants to bury him with the O-lan and his father but his eldest son does not want a servant buried with the family. Additionally, the eldest son is becoming obsessed with money and constantly wants to buy new things. Wang puts his second son in charge of the finances of the family. Also the uncle dies in this chapter and is buried in the family plot. In the next chapter the war is getting closer to home and the uncles son ends up staying at the house with fellow soldiers. While there the cousin asks to wife one of the slaves. He chooses one named Pear except she begs to find someone else, and luckily another slave steps up to the plate. When the cousin leaves to go back to war the reader finds out that the slave is pregnant. The slave has a baby girl and gets married to one of Wang’s laborers. On another note, the uncles wife dies and is buried with her husband in the family plot. Additionally, the two oldest sons begin to fight over money and their wives become enemies. Furthermore, the youngest son admits that he does not want to be a farmer and instead wants to fight in the war. Wang is very distraught by this and tells his son that he can have anything he wants as long as he does not become a soldier. Therefore, the son asks for a slave, Pear, to have children with, but Wang discusses how taboo it is and denies his wish. Then, Pear tells Wang how she is attracted to older men because they are not as fierce as young men so Wang takes hers as his wife. The youngest son is outraged and leaves to fight in the war. In the last book, Wang is nearing death. He tells Pear that he wants her to poison his daughter for he does not believe she will ever be loved. Pear refuses saying that she will take care of her when he passes. After this it becomes very sad in the book because the reader can tell that Wang is going crazy and his family finds his ways old fashion. His sons respect his wishes and buy him a coffin where they take to his first house and he spends his dying days there with the coffin. When his sons are visiting he hears them speaking of selling all the land that Wang worked so hard to gain. This enrages him and he calls his sons evil and warns them if they sell the land it will be the end of them. The sons hold up Wang in his deathly state and try to calm him saying that they will not sell the land however, the book ends with them smiling over their fathers head.

Analysis: This part of the book was rough. It was so sad and depressing throughout. Though the main character, Wang, is never physically harmed all of his loved ones are dying. However, the fact that he is able to pass on his finances and land smoothly to his sons was refreshing. By doing this it was not a surprise or ironic that Wang asks for a coffin and asks to spend his dying days in his home. Additionally, everything seemed to be going so well with his children. The fact that the older two have gotten married and the oldest has had his first child was all very exciting! However, then the mood died when the youngest son admits that he wants to be a soldier. Additionally, the fact that Wang marries the slave that his son asks for first was so disrespectful. That upset me and it wasn’t even my relationship that got messed up.

Application: Now that I am finished my book I can see many ways that human characteristics span time and culture. To begin, the roles of the parents and children can still be seen in civilizations today. The fact that the woman serves the role of producing children and helping their husband with daily work shows that woman are the lesser power which is not really the case anymore. However, the fact that in this story there is a lot of heart ache and loss it shows that this was based on true events. Nowadays people constantly have to deal with pain and problems in their life. The human characteristic that spans time would be remorse and sorrow. Humans feel these emotions when they are sad and they can express them through grieving and releasing stress. In the book we see many characters enraged by certain circumstances or even disheartened because of the loss of certain loved ones.